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“You have to do something beyond containing”: Developing inclusive systems in a partnership of primary schools.

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“You have to do something beyond containing”: Developing inclusive systems in a partnership of primary schools.

Abstract

Reducing fixed term exclusions (FTE) in primary schools is a difficult proposition. This research discusses how a partnership of primary schools developed more inclusive systems to support students previously given FTEs for disciplinary purposes. Longitudinal data from interviews and documentary sources trace the development of an approach amongst primary schools with previously high levels of FTE. The process of developing a model of transferred inclusion (TI) within the partnership led to schools changing practices around behaviour management, thus developing more inclusive systems. The paper elaborates on partnership work around the TI project that opened up discussion and questioning of practice around behaviour, leading to schools thinking about their systemic practice. The benefits of TI, therefore, were a prompt for development, rather than just an intervention to reduce exclusions. Changes in practice supported through the TI process lead to claims that substantive change would not have happened without the TI project.

Keywords: School Partnerships; School Collaboration; Educational Inclusion; Fixed Term Exclusion; Transferred Inclusion

Introduction

This paper explores how a partnership of primary schools aimed to address high levels of fixed term exclusions amongst pupils through a project of ‘Transferred Inclusion’ (TI). We report on the development and change of the partnership during the initial years of the project, how the project led to changing perspectives on inclusion among the Headteachers in the partnership, and the ways in which collaborative processes across the partnership developed through the project.

In a comprehensive education system, many teachers recognise that some young people will really challenge their behaviour management skills. Schools can find it hard to include such children in education, and this can challenge a school’s perceptions of itself as an

inclusive system or organisation. A common response to behaviour management problems is to use Fixed Term Exclusions (FTEs) (where a pupil is sent home for a set number of days) or even Permanent Exclusions (PEs) (where a pupil is no longer allowed to attend that school) (Daniels and Cole 2010). Exclusion refers to the 'expulsion or suspension of a student from school' (Gordon 2001). In England, FTEs are used as one of many measures of school success, leading to policy pressure to reduce FTEs (Ofsted 2015).

Aside from high FTE rates being perceived as a negative reflection upon the school's performance, FTE and PE have been linked more widely to problems of social exclusion (Grimaldi 2012) including unemployment (Farouk 2017), poor social, financial and emotional progress Carlile (2011), and are seen as the trigger to a 'trajectory of difficulty and unhappiness' in later life (Daniels and Cole 2010).

In 2008, a partnership of 18 primary schools in England, some with high levels of FTE, introduced an alternative to their use of FTE as a disciplinary procedure. Instead of being excluded completely from school for a given number of days, a pupil would be sent to another school in the partnership to continue work set by their class teacher, in the presence of a behaviour support worker. This became known as 'transferred inclusion' (TI). The aim of TI was to allow for greater inclusion within the education system, and to develop schools' responses to pupils in disciplinary situations. The management of student behaviour receives considerable attention from the UK government Department for Education (2012) yet the emphasis is often on how pupils need to change in relation to the school, rather than on changes within the school systems (Parsons 2009a). The focus of TI, however, was on how schools could work together to change their systems for supporting pupils in demonstrating acceptable behaviour.

Challenging Behaviour and Exclusions

Over recent years there has been a growing concern in English schools around the standards of behaviour seen within classrooms (Department for Education 2016a and Ofsted 2015), particularly behaviour which interrupts the teaching and learning of other students (Jull 2009). This has led to a complex process of labelling (Waterhouse 2004) to describe pupils and their behaviour including terms such as Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) (Mowat 2010), and Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) (Mowat 2010), which are used to describe students who display behaviour perceived to be incompatible with the 'normal' world or 'rules' of classrooms (Waterhouse 2004; Orsati and Causton-Theoharis 2013). Orsati and Causton-Theoharis (2013) and Gillies and Robinson (2011) argue against this deficit model (where problems are seen as arising within the child or family) and instead adopt a systemic or social model by suggesting that behaviour is a social construct depending upon the context. In this light, behaviours can be seen as arising from the interaction between the context of the school and the individual. Orsati and Causton-Theoharis (2013) suggest that failure to see behaviour in this way has led to schools and teachers employing 'authoritarian' responses to behaviour including the disciplinary measure of exclusion (Gordon 2001; Daniels and Cole 2010).

FTE removes the perpetrator of inappropriate behaviour from the school in the short term (Daniels and Cole 2010) but as a long-term strategy to improve an individual's behaviour it is not thought to be effective (Ofsted 2015). FTEs necessarily lead to missed learning opportunities (Ofsted 2015) which has been argued to actually increase the likelihood of challenging behaviours continuing (Orsati and Causton-Theoharis 2013). This means that far from providing a solution to problematic behaviours, FTEs may actually make them more likely in the future.

The plethora of terms, SEBD and EBD, for example, to describe inappropriate behaviour suggests that defining such behaviours is complex and problematic. Indeed FTE

data varies amongst socioeconomic groups and geographical locations, and this cannot be explained by differences between individual or groups of children alone (Parsons 2009b). Parsons devotes a chapter (15-27) examining low-excluding local authorities' data, to illustrate the importance of a person from within the education system working with Headteachers to find strategic alternatives to FTE.

Schools have therefore sought to find alternative options to FTEs. There is a tension in approach, however, with many schools using punitive responses such as internal exclusion rooms; see for example Barker et al. (2010) and Gillies and Robinson (2011) ,whilst others look at restorative or pastoral approaches aimed at improving behaviour (Kane et al. 2009; Gillies and Robinson 2011). Many of these restorative approaches, however, focus upon changing the child e.g. Mowat (2010) and Osbuth et al. (2016), or the family (Parsons 2009a) thereby supporting a deficit model and ignoring the possibility of systemic change in school context around the child or family (Mowat 2010; Carlile 2011). Osbuth et al. (2016) actually found that one approach which attempted to change the behaviour of children led to an increased likelihood of exclusion. In order for restorative approaches to be successful they need to be accompanied by a systemic cultural change within an organisation (Kane et al. 2009; Gordon 2015)

Inclusion as an Alternative?

Alongside this increased scrutiny upon exclusion has been a focus on inclusion, that may support systemic or cultural change (Ainscow 2010; Dyson et al. 2004). Inclusion has been regarded as an adaptable (Slee 2010) and even 'slippery' concept (Mowat 2010). However, at its core, inclusion refers to including everyone in classrooms (Visser and Stokes 2003) and designing equal opportunities for all within education (Norwich 2014). This approach is in direct contradiction to the disciplinary measure of FTE whereby students are prevented from entering their classrooms. Whilst much of the focus of the inclusion debate has surrounded

children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) (Norwich 2014), a broader understanding of inclusion necessitates focusing more widely upon students who display challenging behaviour (Ainscow and Sandhill 2010; Mowat 2015). Ainscow and Sandhill (2010) argue that the most inclusive schools are those where the school culture encourages teachers to re-evaluate and adapt their practice. Johnson-Harris and Mundschenk (2014) and Conderman and Hedin (2014) suggest changes to teaching approaches which could support students with challenging behaviour. Toson, Burrello, and Knollman (2013) also argue that school leadership needs to support the creation of the right conditions for inclusion. Including students with challenging behaviour therefore requires schools to transform practice (Booth and Ainscow 2011), structure (Katz and Earl 2010), school systems (Gilmore 2012, 2011) and highlighting the importance of context in shaping behaviour (Orsati and Causton-Theoharis 2013).

The current UK approach to attaching a statement or Education, Health and Care Plan, (Education Funding Agency 2016) and individual identification and labelling of children (Waterhouse 2004), with funding following individual children, encourages the individualisation of problems, rather than supporting the development of capacity-building, school-wide systemic approaches to inclusion (Lunt 2007). Such individualised approaches may also lead to an increasing population of students who are seen as difficult to manage (Slee 2010). This aligns with Skidmore (2004) who describes how a focus on pupil deficit can result in a reluctance to change systemic practice within schools, whereas schools who use a ‘discourse of inclusion’ when discussing practice and professional development are more likely to rise to the challenge of systemic transformation. Systemic change, however, can be hard: Mowat (2010) points out that while schools may recognise what they would like to do, they are often starting from a less-than-ideal situation or standpoint. This tension between formal funding mechanisms and the difficulty of change on the one hand, and the

problematic aspects of individual identification of children on the other, means that the process of organisational change for inclusion is far from straightforward.

Partnerships to Support Inclusion?

Partnerships between schools provide a powerful tool for changing practice and systems (Harris and Jones 2010). School partnerships have been found to be helpful in addressing the needs of vulnerable groups of learners (Muijs, West, and Ainscow 2010) including those displaying challenging behaviour which might otherwise lead to an exclusion (Jull 2009). Collaboration and partnerships are seen as key to creating inclusive school communities (Curcic et al. 2011) that may best support such students. The ways in which schools are encouraged to work in partnership by local and national policy contexts are in constant flux, both in the UK and internationally. Many schools, however, join together to try to meet the social and educational needs of their pupils: partnerships can be formed as schools recognise that they are all trying to (or are required to) address similar issues or goals (Billett et al. 2007; Kubiak and Bertram 2010) and also out of economic necessity (Duffy and Gallagher 2015). Dhillon (2007, 214) has described how a partnership can form as a 'pragmatic response to policy', yet over time develop a purpose and identity of its own and become more integral to schools' ways of working. Rose (2012) identified that partnerships can be classified on a continuum ranging from 'traded services' (where services are merely purchased by one partner from another without joint planning) through to 'joint venture' where partnership extends to create a single legal entity between partners. Using this broad continuum partnerships can therefore encompass notions of collaboration and networks (Head 2003; Katz and Earl 2010).

Working together offers potential benefits to schools such as pooling resources and expertise (Kubiak and Bertram 2010) and offers opportunities to find solutions to problems that are too big for schools to solve on their own (Wohlstetter et al. 2003). At the same time

as being encouraged to work in partnership, English schools have increasingly been placed in competition with one another through the development of league tables and academies which undermine the ability for partnership to be successful (Haynes and Lynch 2013; Muijs and Rumyantseva 2014). Muijs and Rumyantseva (2014) propose that schools must therefore work in 'coopetition' with one another where they work together in some areas and compete in others. Financial factors, however, are important with an increased likelihood of partnerships collapsing under financial uncertainty (Haynes and Lynch 2013; Muijs and Rumyantseva 2014). As Carlile (2011) argues a host of tensions affect whether schools choose to work in partnership in what is a complex and stressful landscape.

There are, nonetheless, certain conditions which make it more likely for a partnership to create the long-lasting systemic change required to make schools more inclusive for students with challenging behaviour. Studies have identified several features which seem to predict the success of partnership including ownership, time, focus, commitment to values (Ainscow 2010; Haynes and Lynch 2013), good leadership (Gross et al. 2015) and focused purpose to reduce FTE (Parsons 2009b). These features largely mirror those identified by Wenger (2000) in order to create a community of practice. Haynes and Lynch (2013) acknowledge, however, that developing and sustaining partnerships can be problematic even when these features are initially present. Higham and Yeomans (2010) argue that partnerships which develop in response to a specific agenda may not be long-lasting, whereas partners with their own shared aims and values are likely to continue working together. Partnerships imposed upon schools, however, are less likely to succeed than ones that schools created themselves (Haynes and Lynch 2013). Therefore, partnerships aimed at supporting inclusion for students with challenging behaviour would need to demonstrate to all partners that they are worth the investment in order to be successful.

History of the TI partnership

The TI project took place in the South West of England within a partnership of 18 schools. The geographical area in which the partnership was based had a low socio-economic profile in the bottom 10-30% of most deprived wards in England. The partnership had received funds from Excellence Clusters since 2002 , Excellence in Cities (EiC), and the Behaviour Improvement projects (BIP) between 2005 and 2010, all of which were government projects targeted at disadvantaged areas (Machin, McNally, and Meghir 2010; Hallam, Castle, and Rogers 2005). In particular, BIP was an initiative aimed at reducing fixed term exclusions and improving attendance through dual internal and external capacity building (Hallam, Castle, and Rogers 2005). Despite this, three years into the EiC and BIP funding the rate of fixed term exclusions in partnership primary schools remained high compared to the rest of the local authority (1.07% compared to 0.58% in November 2008). Many partnership schools used their individual funding to employ learning mentors and/or internal behaviour staff but this was not having a consistent effect on rates of FTEs.

Discussions between Headteachers, the leader of the partnership, and the school-led multi-agency team that supported the partnership considered possible approaches to reducing FTEs. Mini pupil referral units (PRUs) and behaviour support units (BSU) are common responses to a need to reduce FTEs (Hallam, Castle, and Rogers 2005). These were not considered appropriate by the partnership, for reasons outlined by Gillies and Robinson (2011). Placement in these units was often long-term and led to students becoming far removed from mainstream education, with other professions taking the lead and Headteachers taking a back seat. The partnership leader, however, had piloted a transferred inclusion (TI) model in another local authority, where disciplinary issues could result in a student being transferred to another school for a limited period of time, and it was this model that the partnership settled on.

Six schools in the partnership originally agreed to take part in the formal project pilot, having received funding from an educational foundation. These schools had a mixed history of FTE, with some frequently excluding before the TI project, and others not at all. The TI project employed two behaviour support workers to work directly with and in schools across the partnership. These workers were aligned to the partnership multi-agency team for practice supervision, and the LA Behaviour Manager for linking to the overall behaviour strategy in the local authority. An early meeting with the Headteachers launched the strategic and organisational details, mapped the expectations, and discussed outcomes of the project. The schools agreed to a weekly roster whereby a student who was the subject of a TI would move to that week's receiving school, where the behaviour support worker was located. Any of the six schools could refer.

The 'partnership within a partnership' nature of the project cluster is of interest for a number of reasons. Regarding the emergence of the collaborative ventures, the wider EiC partnership in this area arose in response to a combination of historically poor attainment amongst the partnership schools, high levels of exclusion (in relation to LA and national levels) and a previous history of partnership work. The TI pilot project cluster in the wider EiC partnership, however, arose out of a need to reduce FTEs. Over two years, these schools had considerable additional resources from the EiC partnership, including learning mentors and multi-agency teams, but high levels of pupil exclusion continued. The partnership lead introduced a second behaviour support worker to work with another cluster of 6 schools, to raise the profile of FTE reduction. The EiC schools who did not participate were small (fewer than 60 pupils), and geographically remote (more than 10 miles away) from the main clusters.

This paper aims to understand the process of TI, and asks:

- How did the TI process work in practice?
- In what ways did school systems change as a result of the TI process?

- How did the school partnership support the development of the inclusive practice?

Method

Three strands of data collection informed this paper. The first comprised interviews with Headteachers in four of the then six project schools in summer 2009, towards the end of the first year of the TI project. These interviews focussed on each school's behaviour management strategy, their use of the TI project, and their beliefs about the outcomes of the TI project.

The second strand comprised interviews (6) and questionnaires (6) in Spring 2012 as the project funding was coming to an end, with Headteachers in 12 of the 18 schools involved with the TI project. These interviews and open-ended questionnaires focussed on:

- the benefits and problems of the TI project;
- how the outcomes of the TI project were evaluated and whether there were any resultant changes in practice;
- the ways in which schools worked together over the course of the TI project, and partnership plans for the future;
- school philosophy and policy around behaviour management;
- multi-agency support for behaviour management.

Included in the interviews were three vignettes describing different types of behaviour management problems (a boy expressing violent behaviour and poor attendance; a boy with Asperger's Syndrome who had brought a knife to school and injured another pupil; and a girl who brought marijuana to school, apparently to impress another girl). These were used to promote discussion around philosophy and policy related to behaviour management.

Third, documentary evidence from the project was used to provide contextual understanding of the individual schools and of the TI project. This included case studies of

pupils who had been referred to the project (written by project staff), and records of numbers of TI referrals and FTEs in project schools.

Ethical issues of this research were approved by the third and fourth authors' institutional ethical procedures. These included ensuring non-identifiability of participants and of any cases used in discussions, informed consent, and the right to refuse participation or withdraw data.

Analysis

First round interviews were conducted by the first author and a research assistant in 2009 (Interview 1 below), and second round interviews by the first and third authors in 2012 (Interview 2 below). All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Analysis of interview and questionnaire data was led by the first author, who along with the third author read through all the interviews once without any coding. A second reading generated a set of initial codes, which were refined after discussion and a repeat round of coding. These codes then informed the development of the themes discussed below.

Results

The Nature of Transferred Inclusion

Transferred inclusions were introduced to the partnership in 2008 as an alternative sanction to FTEs. The general principle was that instead of being sent home, a pupil would be sent to another school for between one and five days, to work in isolation with a behaviour support worker. During the first few months of the project, there were criticisms that the TI was too much of a cosy, pleasant experience for pupils: they received friendly one-to-one attention from the BSW, who tried to work with them on their emotional needs and social skills. Headteachers discussed this at early project meetings, and it was agreed that the BSW should

be more distant, acting in a supervisory role for pupils' school work rather than in a nurturing capacity. Consequently, most of the heads interviewed spoke about the importance of TI being an uncomfortable experience for the pupils. Attending an unfamiliar school, wearing a different uniform to the others around you, and working and taking breaks in isolation were all seen to contribute to the sense of TI as part of the disciplinary process. Most Headteachers interviewed reasoned that after the isolation of a TI in this more punitive framework, returning to their school would be welcomed by most pupils.

The reintegration meeting was a crucial part of the TI process. This restorative event took place upon the pupils' return to their school: they were welcomed back by a senior member of staff, with explicit statements about how much they were valued. Future behaviour plans and targets would be discussed and developed with both pupil and parent. Some Headteachers spoke about the importance of this being a positive experience for pupils: they needed to know they were wanted, and supported, but at the same time this came with certain expectations about acceptable behaviour.

> *In fact we haven't had to send that pupil again to positive transferred inclusion, they're not perfect, no child is, no person is, but their behaviour has improved, and what was lovely is that young person, when they came back from the meeting said that they didn't want to have to go through that again, and that they were pleased to be back, we were able to say that we were pleased to have them back and so it was quite positive. (Headteacher School 1, Interview 2)*

The Place of Transferred Inclusion in Schools' Behaviour Policies

While the nature of the intervention was discussed between schools, Headteachers were also finding a place for TI in schools' behaviour policies. All schools agreed that TI had a place in

their hierarchy of sanctions, and was to be used as an alternative to FTEs. However, at the start of the project there were some discrepancies between the schools regarding exactly how a TI should be used:

> *I think in the beginning we had to be clear about how it was going to be used because I was very conscious that we used it way down the line, whereas other schools were using it after one incident. We had a meeting didn't we. Some schools saw it as replacing their behaviour policy which I didn't see it, I saw it in addition to the behaviour policy to extend it. (Headteacher School 2, Interview 1)*

Over time schools converged on their view of how TI should be used. At the time of the second interview, TI was universally described as one of the last resorts prior to FTE in response to unacceptable behaviour. It was used as a consequence of unacceptable behaviour, and Headteachers also believed that it acted as a deterrent. One Headteacher described a pupil's relationship with TI thus:

> *Although he's very challenging, he desperately, desperately, desperately doesn't want to go. But he's had to go twice. He would much rather be sent home for five days than he would to the TI so you know that with the support of the TI and the support of his parents, you've got every chance of keeping him in school, and giving him the best. So I would say that's cut down his exclusions definitely. (Headteacher School 3, Interview 2)*

The descriptive statistics on the numbers of TI referrals and FTEs over the course of the project in partnership schools, and county-wide can be seen in Table 1. The number of FTEs decreased over time: this would be expected as schools now had an alternative sanction. Notably however, the number of TIs also decreased over the 4 years of the project, with only 11 pupils having repeat referrals. This suggests that the integration of TI into

school policies and the focus and reflection on positive behaviour management had an effect on pupil behaviour in the school, but also suggests schools need time to work together to achieve goals and purposes.

Table 1. Summary of Transferred Inclusions in the Partnership, the Local Authority and Nationally

Supporting Pupils and Families

Headteachers spoke about using a preventative approach to behaviour management, trying to encourage appropriate behaviour and avoid behaviour which would result in a TI. While the TI was described as a deterrent, Headteachers spoke about a focus on clear rules so that pupils know what expectations are, rewarding positive behaviour, and emphasising what you need to do to be in a position to learn. Supporting pupils' learning and behaviour needs were primary concerns: Headteachers discussed the need for stimulating teaching to motivate pupils, and for pupils to understand that while inappropriate behaviour was not condoned, the school would not reject the pupils either.

All those interviewed, however, spoke about the need to understand pupils' family context and life: this was seen as key to developing appropriate support:

> *What we've always been good as a school at is contacting parents more when we see a few triggers coming. I think if we see that they've gone a little bit off the boil, we'll get in there early and I think we'll say look, they're normally fine, but we've noticed the last few days have gone a bit off now, can you think of anything, mum, dad, carer, at home that could have triggered that? So you try and avoid it, you try and get in early and just try and nip it in the bud and say look, the way things are going the last few days, we want to avoid TI, and yeah it does work and we are good at*

that as a school but I think we've got even better with that. (Deputy Head, School 4, Interview 2)

Headteachers described aiming to be proactive, rather than reactive, when it came to addressing behaviour: working hard to involve and engage families before problems escalate. They spoke about drawing on a range of services, agencies, and approaches in order to support children and families: different layers and types of support were built into school systems, to enable schools to meet the needs of individual children and families. The key to this was understanding individuals to identify what support was appropriate for each child. While most tended to suggest that support was needed at the level of the family, one Headteacher was more explicit about the need for the school to look to its own systems to address problems. She spoke about behaviour 'sending a message', the need to question why a child might be behaving in a certain way, and understanding what the school can do to change that behaviour. The school, the Headteacher suggested, needed to 'learn to read the signals'.

As was pointed out by Headteachers in some questionnaires and interviews, the nature of TI means that, for it to work, all schools must be committed to a certain level of involvement. At the very least this means a school providing an appropriate space when it was their turn to host the TI, and communicating the relevant information when a pupil was sent on a TI. The extent to which TIs were integrated into school systems varied between schools. Of those interviewed in the second round of interviews, one Headteacher preferred not to use it, finding that structured behaviour plans which fully engaged the parents were more successful. Nevertheless, he was willing to provide supportive funding for the continuation of the project within the partnership model. Most of the Headteachers, however, were willing to use it should the need arise and had a clear place for it in their behaviour management strategies. Crucially, though, they all reported that the need for TI was reducing,

making it '*potentially sustainable between partner schools*'. As schools' behaviour management strategies became more effective with clear expectations and boundaries for pupils and more preventative support work, fewer pupils were demonstrating behaviour which would result in a TI.

> *I think it's made us look at our behaviour policy which we do on a regular basis, review it and we look at the sanctions, we look at the praise, to avoid as many TIs as possible. Is our praise system correct, are the children getting their rewards, is the learning exciting for them, do they want to be in school, and we try to go to a more cross curriculum approach. The behaviour has been pretty good. (Deputy Head, School 4, Interview 2)*

The way in which schools worked together to develop consistent, cluster-wide approaches to behaviour appeared to have developed over the course of the TI project. This started with the need to work through the meaning of TI: when it was used, how it should be delivered, and the ethos behind it. The need for consistency and communication across the partnership was highlighted in most interviews. Through discussions on the TI project, Headteachers and schools developed and cemented relationships, and went on to work together on other issues. Some of those interviewed spoke about groups of Headteachers (and on occasion, whole schools) from the TI cluster meeting on a regular basis to discuss other issues, around curriculum and teaching approaches for example. This was described by one Headteacher as '*Schools having more of a community approach rather than an individual school approach*'. It appeared that the TI project had enabled schools to continue developing a dialogue with each other about pupil behaviour and learning, which they were intent on continuing after the funding for the TI project had ceased. Some Headteachers described

schools' plans to contribute towards a support worker so that TIs could continue: schools clearly valued the TI resource and the place it held in their behaviour policies.

Discussion

How inclusive is a TI?

Participation in the TI project appeared to result in a reduction in FTEs and, over time, in TIs which therefore increased the numbers of students included within their mainstream lessons when they previously might have been excluded. However, where TI was used, it was seen as a useful deterrent to further poor behaviour *because pupils felt socially excluded*. This raises the question of how truly inclusive such a system can be: pupils are continuing learning, but not participating fully in the school experience and indeed not even located in the same building as their classmates (therefore not 'included' in their classrooms as suggested by (Visser and Stokes 2003). Similarly, Gillies and Robinson (2011, 171) suggested that inclusion in a behaviour support unit was more about 'expulsion… to the margins of school life' which, to a certain extent, is what was achieved in a TI. While the process of TI means that young people are still being included in the education system (as opposed to FTEs where they are excluded), a TI cannot be said to be 'fully inclusive' in that the child is socially excluded from the group for a period of time.

Indeed, TI was even altered by the partnership to further increase its perceived punitive or deterrent value and was suggested by some to be more punitive than an FTE. Orsati and Causton-Theoharis (2013) have argued that missed high-quality learning (a feature of both FTE and TI) may make challenging behaviour more likely in the future. However, this was not reported in relation to TI, and both FTE and TI reduced over the course of the study. How then is it possible that a system such as TI, which does not appear to represent inclusive ideals (Norwich 2014) has succeeded in reducing the instances of challenging

behaviour and led to an increase in the numbers of students remaining in education with their peers?

Features of the TI Partnership

The solution to this conundrum may lie in the system surrounding the TI project: the nature of the schools' partnership and the consequences that went much further than the initial goal of using TI. Many authors have argued that schools which have a culture of reflecting upon practice (Ainscow and Sandhill 2010), have leadership which supports inclusion (Toson, Burrello, and Knollman 2013), and are willing to transform, are the most likely to be able to create an inclusive environment (Katz and Earl 2010; Booth and Ainscow 2011). The partnership process surrounding the TI project created the conditions in which all of these features were able to co-exist. By participating in the partnership, school leaders showed an interest in inclusion, a willingness to transform practice (as no school had a TI model before the project began) and had time and space in which to reflect upon their practice.

Alongside the features which have been argued to make a school more likely to be inclusive, the partnership also had many features which have been identified to make collaboration in any context more likely to be successful, including commitment and shared goals (Ainscow 2010). The partnership had sufficient funding - identified as an important feature of successful partnerships by Haynes and Lynch (2013) and Parsons (2009b) - some of which was contributed by the schools, and the schools showed a commitment to the project in offering up space and making use of it. Schools also had a shared goal of reducing FTEs. The partnership therefore helped to achieve a feeling of belonging and participation with each school gaining something from it individually but also working on the wider issue of social inclusion arguably too big for each school to tackle on their own (Wohlstetter et al. 2003).

These features coming together allowed the partnership to develop from a responsive joint planning mode of working, focussing only on TIs and the practicalities surrounding them, to a more systemic partnership (Rose 2012) looking much more widely than just TIs. The schools therefore moved from initially discussing the TI during their partnership meetings to reflecting upon consistent and cluster-wide approaches. Schools improved their relationships with one another and started seeing the issue of challenging behaviour as a community problem including all the schools, students and families rather than as a problem of individual children. This led to an openness to look at systemic changes across the cluster.

Partnerships developing inclusive systems?

This combination of the right context for developing inclusive systems and the features of an effective partnership meant that whilst it is true that the partnership achieved its initial goal of reducing FTEs, participants reported far wider consequences of the partnership than this alone. Through coming together to work out the details of TI, a shared dialogue about supporting positive behaviour developed. Ultimately, the process of working in the partnership with other schools meant that schools began to see TI as part of their wider system rather than someone else's responsibility. This meant that schools viewed the outcomes of the partnership as wider than its initial goal and indeed schools reported wanting to continue the partnership on their own. The wider benefits of the systemic partnership were felt to such an extent that one partner continued to participate even though they did not use TI.

Schools reported that the partnership had encouraged them to review their behaviour systems and make changes to the ways that they encouraged students to behave positively. They looked at changes the schools could make to affect a child's behaviour. They implemented reintegration meetings which they felt made students feel valued. They reflected upon the experiences of children within their classrooms and considered how to support and

work closely in partnership with families – which Mowat (2010) identified as a key facilitator of inclusion. The resultant changes in school systems meant that there was a reduction in the kind of behaviour which would lead to a pupil being excluded to some degree, be that socially (TI) or completely (FTE). It would seem, then, that the development of the group of schools into a systemic partnership enabled more inclusive systems to be developed. Therefore, while the TI itself cannot be held up as an example of full inclusion in that those pupils did not participate in the classroom for the duration of the TI, in this case it worked as a tool to develop more inclusionary school systems.

Limitations of the Partnership

The partnership may have led to the development of more inclusive systems but some Headteachers raised the issue of 'beyond' children, for whom TI was not successful. A wide range of internal resources and external support were often directed at these pupils, in order to ensure they could remain in education. The systemic changes resulting from the introduction of the TI and subsequent partnership of the schools were not enough to support these children. Headteachers were doubtful about the future of such pupils when they reached secondary school because their support needs were so high, and it had taken so long in their own school to build to a functional level of trust and understanding. It is unclear the extent to which further partnership working between the schools would facilitate the development of systems which may support these students. At the very least, such a partnership would presumably need to involve the secondary schools where these students were headed as the Headteachers implied that it was a future inability to be included which was their main concern.

The TI partnership also did not actively involve parents or students as a partner in developing the system and, whilst the importance of *working with* families was an established

outcome of the partnership, they were not formally *part of* the systemic partnership. It is unclear the extent to which this limited the possibility for systemic change which would support inclusion from the context of both home and school (Mowat 2010).

It is also unclear the extent to which increased competition between schools in recent years, alongside increased financial uncertainty, would limit the success of such a partnership going forward. The findings, whereby schools managed to decrease FTEs and TIs using a systemic approach, also continue to run at odds to the government system of individualising student problems through a funding model which allocates funds to individual students. This partnership had local authority support and was part-funded and, even though the schools felt that it had become sustainable for them in the long run, it is unclear whether schools will be able to afford the initial financial investment to start similar projects when they are under pressure to evidence how funding has been spent on individual pupils (Education Funding Agency 2016)

However, what is interesting is the fact that this partnership which arguably had a non-inclusive system at its core was still successful in increasing inclusive systems in spite of this. In this project, it is not the TI which was successful in increasing inclusion for students but the development of a partnership making systemic changes around this. This leads to the question of whether the process of working in partnership, even in imperfect circumstances which may not initially appear to suggest a change in inclusive systems, may still offer conditions in which inclusive systems can develop. What appeared to create the biggest changes in this partnership was the opportunity for reflection on practice around behaviour and FTEs, shared dialogue and a shared commitment to increase inclusion by all partners.

Future research would benefit from considering whether or not certain partnerships between schools may actually increase the likelihood of developing systemic approaches to inclusion even if this is not the specified goal. It is possible that more formal partnerships,

such as academy chains, which increase the likelihood of partnership moving towards systemic partnership or even joint ventures (Rose 2012), would necessitate more systemic, and therefore potentially more effective, approaches to inclusion. The conditions which appeared to make this partnership successful are still possible within a financially uncertain educational context (Department for Education 2016b) and indeed may even increase as schools continue to face significant pressure to reduce exclusions. For a project where the actual premise had debatable inclusive value for the children and was sometimes perceived by Headteachers as punitive, the partnership allowed for a more inclusive system to be developed which ultimately led to greater levels of inclusion, and reduced FTE, for some of the most marginalised students.

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Table 1. Summary of Transferred Inclusions in the Partnership, the Local Authority and Nationally

	Transferred Inclusion (all partnership schools)			FTE (all partnership schools)		FTE (per hundred students in the local authority)	FTE (per hundred students national)
	Number of Children referred	Number of TI	Number of TI per hundred students	Number of FTE	Number of FTE per hundred students		
Year 2007/08	0	0	0	50	1.07	0.58	1.06
Year 2008/09	30	50	1.08	43	0.93	0.59	0.97
Year 2009/10	24	35	0.74	14	0.3	0.68	0
Year 2010/11	25	36	0.76	12	0.25	0.38	0